

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (currently amended) ~~A biologically pure~~ An isolated strain of *E. coli* gram negative bacteria which is characterized as comprising an *Hte* mutation included in the strain deposited as ATCC No. 55962 and by having more efficient transformation with foreign plasmids than *E. coli* gram negative bacteria that lack an said *Hte* mutation.

2 to 13. (cancelled)

14. (new) The isolated strain of claim 1, wherein the isolated strain is a bacteria selected from: a species of the genus *Pseudomonas*; a species of the genus *Rhizobium*; a species of the genus *Agrobacterium*; a species of the genus *Salmonella*; a species of the genus *Proteus*; a species of the genus *Shigella*; or a species of the genus *Klebsiella*.